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BASIC ATTITUDES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, FRANCE, AND THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TOWARD THE BERLIN AND GERMAN QUESTIONS

Since the beginning of the Berlin crisis in November, 1958, the positions of the major Western European powers -- the United Kingdom, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany -- have remained essentially unchanged. The positions of these governments toward the Berlin crisis and the questions of German reunification and European security are reflected in their attitudes toward the forthcoming exchange of visits between President Eisenhower and Khrushchev and the prospects of later summit meetings.

Despite its continued advocacy of the maintenance of Western strength in Europe and the Western position in Berlin, the United Kingdom is convinced that a detente with the Soviet Union must be achieved. It doubts that a general German settlement favorable to the West can be reached in the foreseeable future, and seeks a modus vivendi which will avoid the risk of hostilities and preserve Western presence in Berlin for an interim period without jeopardy to Allied rights thereafter. To this end the United Kingdom is willing to consider concessions leading toward de facto recognition of the East German regime and limitations on Western troops in Berlin. The United Kingdom views the Geneva Foreign Ministers' Conference as a success leading to continued negotiations, and as a long-time proponent of summit talks it welcomes the Khrushchev-Eisenhower visits.

France views the Berlin crisis as an attempt by the Soviet Union to weaken German solidarity with the West which must be resisted firmly at all points. It believes that the status of Berlin can be negotiated only as part

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of an unlikely, wider settlement of the problems of German reunification and disarmament. It supports close Franco-German cooperation as a means of bolstering French security and of augmenting current French efforts to gain equal status with the US and UK in determining Western policy. Because of these fears and nationalistic sentiments, the regime of General de Gaulle has grave reservations about joint United States-Soviet talks at this time.

The Federal Republic of Germany is primarily concerned with maintaining full Western support, political and military, for its security and its search for reunification. It sees the Berlin crisis as a Soviet attempt to split West Germany from its allies and to perpetuate Communist control of East Germany. The Federal Republic has therefore attempted to restrain its allies, particularly the US and the UK, from wavering in their non-recognition policy towards the German Democratic Republic and from making security concessions without getting equal political concessions from the Soviets. It has welcomed the Eisenhower-Khrushchev visits, but seeks reassurance that United States commitments in Europe will not be changed.

The sharpest difference between the three powers is that which divides the UK from the other two. France and West Germany insist on maintaining firm resistance against Soviet pressure until such time as a general European settlement may be possible. The United Kingdom also seeks a general settlement but believes a start must be made now. It considers a limited Berlin agreement important enough to warrant some Western concessions. The French and West German positions, while tactically similar, differ in that West Germany is preoccupied with the close relationship of security and reunification while France is concerned with controlling German power as well as with preserving Western security in the face of Soviet pressure and adding to her own prestige.

The Western European powers are unlikely to change their positions significantly during the forthcoming series of top-level negotiations. All three remain uncertain, although in varying degrees, as to whether the Khrushchev-Eisenhower visits mean a real, if limited, thaw in the cold war or whether they may signal United States concessions to Soviet pressure. If the latter, only the United Kingdom might interpret concessions as anything but a defeat for the West, while the French and the Germans

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 would be driven to urgent examination of alternatives,
 including the formation of a continental bloc, in order
 to protect themselves against anticipated Soviet moves.

I. THE BRITISH POSITION

The adjournment of the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers and the accompanying announcement of forthcoming talks between President Eisenhower and Premier Khrushchev found UK views on the problem of Berlin and of German unification largely unchanged. The major characteristics of the UK position on these two issues may be summarized as follows:

1. The British are reluctant to risk war over Berlin. They do not believe the Western position in Berlin can be maintained intact, without any concessions to the USSR, unless the West is prepared to show it will risk war.
2. The British feel that the Berlin issue has to be separated from the broader problems of German reunification and European security and negotiated since no solution of reunification or security problems is likely now.
3. They believe that it may be necessary to consider de facto recognition of the East German regime and limits on Western forces in Berlin in exchange for Soviet agreement to an interim solution that permits the continuation of Western presence in Berlin for a certain period without jeopardy to Allied rights thereafter.
4. Although the British still declare that it is their policy that Germany should be reunified by free elections, they doubt that this solution is feasible in the foreseeable future; they believe, rather, that Western proposals for reunification should be advanced as maximum objectives. There is some UK willingness to consider the Soviet proposal for permitting the Germans to negotiate with each other on reunification.
5. They maintain that the questions of Berlin and reunification must be kept the subjects of continuing negotiation, with meetings at the highest levels as often as necessary.

Adherence to this stand has provoked accusations of "softness" from some of the United Kingdom's allies. The UK continues to be firm, however, in its strategic commitments. It remains opposed to the abandonment of West Berlin, to the establishment of a neutral Germany, and to the disengagement of forces in Central Europe (although it has indicated willingness to consider so-called "limitation of forces" in an agreed area in Central Europe). Moreover, the UK remains convinced that the fundamental threat to it comes from the Soviet Union while its security

* See IR No. 8070 entitled "A Critical Appraisal of Western Unity" for an analysis of this topic.

derives from its partnership with the United States. Therefore, the United Kingdom is determined to remain a loyal and active member of NATO and a firm partner of the US. The British realize that their security is based on a nuclear deterrent composed of SAC, augmented by their own strategic bomber force, and the system of US bases in Britain and around the world, but they do not believe that certain concessions on the German issues would necessarily alter the nuclear stalemate.

The post-Geneva thinking of the UK on Berlin and reunification must be considered in the context of that country's awareness of its helplessness in nuclear war, its traditionally pragmatic approach to foreign relations in general and unrepresentative governments in particular, and its long-standing desire for a detente with the USSR. The British, no longer sure that "there will always be a Britain" after a nuclear attack, believe it is essential for the Soviet Union and the West to seek a modus vivendi by negotiating. They do not expect negotiations to yield immediate and far-reaching results, but they do believe fervently that it is of supreme importance for the West and the USSR to achieve some agreement, however limited. They feel that continuous diplomatic activity can deflect Soviet threats and improve chances of working out a reasonable adjustment between the USSR and the West. The pressures for negotiation are intensified by the prospect of an early election, but they do not derive solely from political considerations.

Moreover, the British believe that because only Khrushchev can speak for the Soviet Union, there is no alternative to periodic summit conferences. Prime Minister Macmillan has said that a summit meeting should not be thought of "as a single peak, but as one of a continuous chain."

The British by no means viewed the Geneva Conference as a failure because it did not reach agreement; on the contrary, they considered the very fact of its having been held an accomplishment because the participants were no longer—in Macmillan's phrase—"in an atmosphere of ultimatum" but rather "in an atmosphere of negotiation." When the Conference adjourned, and the Eisenhower-Khrushchev visits were announced, government, opposition and press all expressed relaxation. Announcement of the visits has reduced pressures for an early summit meeting since the British now regard such a meeting as inevitable.

The British feel that the announcement of the Eisenhower-Khrushchev visits represents a justification of the approach to the easing of East-West tensions that they have followed since their Prime Minister Eden invited the Soviet leaders to visit the UK in 1956. Many credit Macmillan with breaking the ice for the Eisenhower-Khrushchev talks and an expected summit conference by having gone to Moscow last February.

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II. THE FRENCH POSITION

Throughout the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers the French have taken a firmer and more uncompromising stand on all issues discussed there with the Soviets than either the UK or even the Federal Republic. They have avoided any attempts at "meeting the Russians halfway" or making special efforts to reach compromises with the Soviets on specific issues a la Lloyd.

French official reaction to the proposed Khrushchev visit to the US has been cool. No statements were made at the top level. De Gaulle, as part of his effort to display French independence of the US and the UK, rejected the idea of a Western summit preparatory to Khrushchev's visit to the US, lest this appear as a mandate to the US to act as the spokesman in dealing with Khrushchev.

During the entire period of the present Berlin crisis the French have been extremely reluctant to initiate any negotiating positions. [This is not to say that the French position is flabby but rather one of "stand-pattism" and not showing one's cards.] The French want to maintain the European status quo including that of Berlin -- not at the price of Berlin. Both De Gaulle and Couve de Murville consider it essential that the Western Allies retain the rights which they acquired by the German surrender in 1945, including freedom of communication with Berlin.

[The French are extremely reluctant to assist in steps which might lead to a general European settlement weakening the security of Western Europe or adversely altering the relative power status of France vis-a-vis Germany. Of all the Western Allies, therefore, France is the least interested in the reunification of Germany.]

Whereas the French believe that the other Western Allies consider that the status of Berlin is only negotiable in terms of wider issues -- Germany, Central Europe, disarmament -- the French would prefer to stand on legal rights and to confine the issue to the access question. This may be further reflected in a reluctance to engage in a Summit conference. While France has nothing against the division of Europe in its present form, it cannot countenance this division within the framework of disarmament, disengagement, or weakening of the West's military posture.]

France does not wish to see Western Germany cut loose from its Western military and economic ties. The present Franco-German rapprochement is, from the French point of view, designed to preclude this. Quite apart from Germany, per se, reunification on terms acceptable to the Soviets would alter the entire military balance in Europe to the almost certain detriment of France and this is an added reason for French aversion to reunification.

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In the French view, the Soviets are using Berlin as a gambit to maintain "a state of constant tension leading to weaker German resolve and bring about a desire for neutralism in Germany." For this reason, regardless of other considerations, Berlin must be held.

As was to be expected, the French do not want to take the Berlin problem to the UN because of their great distrust of the UN, based on their own experiences with it in connection with Suez and Algeria, and because they fear that UN debate could tie the hands of the West. The French are especially concerned lest the approach to the UN might occur following a probe by the West but prior to the use of force by the West with a resultant blockade situation in which the initiative passed from the Western Allies to the UN.

For various reasons -- e.g., the existence of a strong government, lack of opposition, France's geographic position on the continent, concern regarding Germany's future vis-a-vis France -- France has responded to the Berlin crisis in a manner that seems to take into account to a far lesser degree the actual dangers and implications of war than has been the case in the UK or even West Germany. While General de Gaulle's actions and pronouncements are often unexpected as to timing and content, there seems no reason to think that France's policy on Berlin will become any less firm in the near future.

However, France's firm policy up to now has, according to General de Gaulle, been predicated on American power and leadership. It is apparent that the developments in the Berlin crisis during the past eight months have led the French to distrust the British completely and to have grave doubts as to the firmness of the US. This, combined with the resurgence of French nationalism since De Gaulle's takeover in May 1958, has caused the French to try to force the US to consider a complete revamping of the NATO Alliance so that, in French eyes, the Alliance would be a really effective instrument of Western military policy and the French voice in this policy would be equal to that of the UK and the US.

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III. THE WEST GERMAN POSITION

The West German Government remains firmly opposed to any agreement on Berlin that might adversely affect West German security. It rejects both Soviet proposals for a "free city" and a German peace treaty, and the proposal that reunification should be left to the Germans themselves through the creation of an all-German commission. When Khrushchev made his initial demands in November 1958, the West Germans were concerned primarily with their long range problems of reunification and security. The Western responses to the Soviet threat in Berlin, especially that of the UK, persuaded Bonn that the chance of reunification was remote and that the Soviets might succeed in undermining West German internal and military security. This new preoccupation led the West Germans to regard the Geneva Conference simply as a holding operation. They believed that the Western negotiating position contained an increasing tendency toward accommodation of the USSR, and they grew more fearful that a settlement inimical to their long range security interests might be accepted in return for a temporary respite of Soviet pressure on Berlin. At Geneva the West German actions left the impression of inflexibility and a negative attitude towards any effort to reach agreement. Chancellor Adenauer openly expressed his concern about UK and US motives, especially after Macmillan's visit to Moscow and the death of Secretary Dulles. However, German concern dates from an earlier period in 1955-6 when revision of allied military strategy, as symbolized by the British White Paper and the so-called Radford Plan created doubts about the intention and ability of the Alliance to defend the continent. Internal political difficulties in Germany since November, notably the challenge of Ludwig Erhard to Adenauer's dominating role, have increased German rigidity. Although the official response to the Khrushchev-Eisenhower meeting was favorable, the Federal Government is eager to be reassured that both US assessment of Soviet intentions and the US commitment to European defense are unaltered.

A. The Basic West German Position

The policy of the Government of the Federal Republic is dominated by the long range goals of reunification by peaceful and democratic means and the attachment of a reunified Germany to an integrated Europe. The Federal Republic relies for military security and for diplomatic support on its NATO allies, particularly the US. It maintains that the former occupying powers -- the US, UK, France and USSR -- are jointly responsible for the solution of all-German questions including the status of Berlin. It can accept the division of Germany as a temporary expedient, but feels that it cannot be indefinitely maintained and that unless some progress toward reunification is achieved the East German population will become permanently separated from the West. Pending reunification, the Federal Republic claims to be the only legitimate spokesman for the German people; accordingly the government refuses to recognize the "German Democratic Republic" or to concede anything to Soviet pressure unless concessions are clearly linked to a guaranteed program for reunification.

Within this framework the Federal Government has expressed itself on the following specific questions.

1. Berlin

A Berlin settlement can be reached only in the context of reunification and a broad European security arrangement. The Western Powers should neither accept East German controls over access to the city nor grant de facto recognition to the East German regime in any other manner as the price of insuring access. The maintenance of an allied garrison in West Berlin is indispensable to its safety: a UN garrison would be an unacceptable substitute since it could not automatically commit the allied powers in the event of aggression. The Federal Government is ready to accept for as long as may be necessary the present status of Berlin since it is based on allied responsibility for the security of the city.

2. Reunification

German reunification should take place by phases, if necessary over a period of years, and in connection with the development of a European security system. Contributions to this program by either East or West Germany should be made only under Four Power auspices and with Four Power consent. Provision for free elections to determine the character of a united German government is indispensable, but such elections may be postponed to the last phase of the reunification process. To negotiate with the "German Democratic Republic" as an equal would destroy any genuine hope for an acceptable solution of reunification and would raise the Soviet price for an all-German peace treaty, particularly in the security area.

3. Security and Disengagement

The Federal Republic is dependent on its Western allies for its security. Both the Government and people have indicated that security must have priority, at least for the present, over reunification. Unless the Federal Republic is protected and integrated into the Western system, West Germany may lose its chance for reunification or even its national existence. West German security demands not only Western support, but optimum development of the armed forces of the Federal Republic, implying progressive relaxation of WEU restrictions on types of West German military equipment. The Federal Government is unwilling to accept any disengagement proposal based on reduction or "freezing" of forces of armaments in a zone encompassing Germany, particularly if limitations were applied specifically to West German forces, unless such a proposal required commensurate political concessions by the USSR.

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4. Peace Treaty

The final peace settlement must be negotiated with a united Germany and its terms must leave her free to determine her own foreign policy. The military status of a united Germany should depend on the establishment of a European security framework, preferably based on a general disarmament agreement. The territorial limits of a united Germany should be delineated according to its 1937 frontiers: the Oder-Neisse line is not acceptable as part of a definitive treaty of peace (but this point may be moderated by stating the Oder-Neisse line will not be altered by German force).

B. West German View of Soviet Objectives

The Federal Government believes that Soviet objectives in the current crisis extend far beyond Berlin. They believe that these objectives are a series of interrelated elements:

1. Isolation or neutralization of the Federal Republic, to be achieved by forcing its withdrawal from NATO, limiting the West German military effort, and demanding the removal of US forces from Germany.
2. Elimination of West Berlin as a Western outpost, to be achieved by forcing abandonment of the city by Allied garrisons or re-establishing effective Soviet participation in West Berlin's administration.
3. Consolidation of the Soviet and Communist hold on East Germany, to be achieved by obtaining de facto and eventually de jure recognition of the East German regime and demonstrating that West Berlin is at the mercy of the East Germans.

The West Germans believe that an interrelated series determined the timing of the Soviet diplomatic offensive: growing military power particularly in missile capability; increased confidence which it gave to Soviet leaders; desire to prevent the development of the military power of German armed forces backed by the US strategic deterrent; concern over potential West German influence on Soviet Satellites, especially Poland; Khrushchev's desire for increased domestic prestige; and the dynamism of the Communist philosophy of international politics. The Federal Government is deeply impressed by Khrushchev's display of confidence and is inclined to believe that since Western objectives may be extremely difficult to accomplish it is necessary to buy time.

C. West German Attitude Toward Allies

The Federal Republic recognizes that it is not sovereign in matters affecting Germany as a whole or the status of Berlin. The Government is aware that the national interests of West Germany's allies may oppose the accomplishment of German reunification despite the pledges to support it. Traditional fears and recognition of German power

persist in some quarters and have been increased in consequence of the rapid economic recovery of the Federal Republic and its highly favorable trade position. The role of the Federal Republic in NATO defense planning has become increasingly important and it claims equality in the making of Western policy, at least in the security field.

1. The United States

The Federal Government has pinned its hopes on the US because the US is the strongest of its allies and US interests conflict least with those of West Germany. The West Germans are extremely sensitive to the possibility of losing US protection and will strongly resist plans or proposals to reduce US military commitments in continental Europe.

2. The UK and France

The West Germans are fully aware that in the current crisis they are vulnerable to British and French pressure. Without allied support the Federal Government risks the loss of Berlin and a severe setback in its long-range aims for reunification and for expanded power and prestige within the Western community. It therefore seeks to delay or modify the effect of tendencies toward compromise with the USSR on the basic questions of an all-German settlement or a change in the status of Berlin.

The Federal Government makes a clear distinction between the UK and France. It has been particularly chary of British policy in Central Europe and British efforts to promote detente between the West and the USSR. Chancellor Adenauer has become suspicious that Prime Minister Macmillan may convince the US that it is time to agree to a general European settlement with the USSR. Adenauer fears such an arrangement would be made at the expense of German security interests and would preclude reunification.

Because of his concern for possible US-UK moves and because rapprochement with France is a cornerstone of his policy, Chancellor Adenauer has leaned heavily on General de Gaulle for political and diplomatic support in the Berlin crisis. In return, Adenauer has supported De Gaulle's efforts to build up French prestige and power through the EEC and weapons development.

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D. Future Development of the West German Position

Within the Government there are two approaches to the problem of the future development of German politics. Some leaders feel that the Federal Republic must concede some degree of de facto recognition to the East German regime in order to preserve the safety of West Berlin and to preclude arrangements toward some form of disengagement that might jeopardize development of West German security resources. Another group is convinced that steps toward recognition and concessions on security would equally menace the continuation of basic West German foreign policies. This group sees no chance of solving the current crisis without a broad East-West detente and a general disarmament agreement. A minority view holds that Germany's military status must be fixed by Four Power agreement before any effective progress can be expected either on Berlin's status or reunification. This group is closer to the opinion of the opposition Social Democrats.

The key aspect of current West German policy, however, is summed up in Adenauer's formula of "no concessions without counter-concessions". Against the background of his strong convictions and personality, this implies a substantial degree of rigidity, but this is modified by willingness to negotiate bona fide solutions of key problems involving Germany in the broadest terms.

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